

Feared Exile Attack on Central America CIA Man in Bay of Pigs

Gave Warning

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By David Wise

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Richard M. Bissell Jr., who ran the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion for the Central Intelligence Agency, said yesterday that the armed Cuban exile brigade might have tried to seize territory in Central America if it had not been sent to invade Cuba.

The suggestion that the CIA might have lost control of the Cuban exiles if President Kennedy had canceled the invasion, and that the intelligence agency warned of this possibility, had not been made publicly before. Mr. Bissell spoke out in a lengthy copy-righted interview in The Washington Evening Star.

The account was the latest in a spate of stories that have revived debate over the disastrous Cuban invasion, the worst setback of the Kennedy administration. On Monday, historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., wrote about the Bay of Pigs in Life magazine. Tomorrow Theodore C. Sorensen will give his version in Look magazine. Both men are former assistants to Mr. Kennedy, and both accounts are taken from books they will publish this fall.

In the Star interview, Mr. Bissell said: "We did warn more than once that there would be a very difficult problem with this armed, highly motivated unit in case the operation were canceled. We had no final plan of what would become of it."

"They (the exiles) were the most powerful military force between Mexico and Panama, and it is entirely possible that they might have tried to seize a base in Nicaragua, Honduras or Guatemala. There is not the slightest doubt that they could have defeated any Guatemalan force."

It was the second time Mr. Bissell had broken silence since he resigned from the CIA in February, 1962, during the shakeup that followed the Bay of Pigs invasion. On May 4, he was interviewed on an NBC-TV documentary "The Science of Spying."

The former CIA Deputy Director for Plans, who directed the U-2 program for the intelligence agency, was interviewed in Hartford where he is an executive of the United Aircraft Corp.

The exile force he spoke of was trained clandestinely in Guatemala by the CIA, and dispatched by President Kennedy on April 17, 1961, to invade the south coast of Cuba

at the Bay of Pigs. Training of the exiles had commenced under President Eisenhower.

According to the Star interview, Mr. Bissell feels that President Kennedy's decision to cancel a second air strike by exile B-26 bombers against Premier Castro's airfields might have made a "critical difference" in the outcome of the invasion.

"If we had been able to dump five times the tonnage of bombs on Castro's airfields, we would have had a damned good chance," he said in the interview. Mr. Schlesinger wrote that the President's decision to cancel the second strike was "an error," but not

The Exile B-26 Bombers took off Nicaragua and attacked Castro's Air Bases in the first strike. A CIA "cover story," announced in Miami, said it was the work of pilots defecting inside Cuba. President Kennedy canceled the second strike, scheduled for the day of the invasion, be-

cause the U. S. role was seeping out.

In the Star interview, Mr. Bissell is quoted as saying U.S. officials miscalculated the chances of keeping the U. S. role in the invasion secret. "The hope existed that it could be plausibly disclaimed by the U. S. government," he said.

The star said Mr. Bissell is "convinced that the U. S. will have to intervene in the affairs of other countries with some frequency in the future."

The Star also published for the first time a picture of Mr. Bissell receiving the national security medal from President Kennedy in April, 1962. It had previously been reported that Mr. Bissell received a medal when he left the CIA, but there was no announcement at the time.

White House officials said 12 national security medals have been awarded since 1953, but that only about half of the recipients have been publicly identified.